

Remarks

Favorable reconsideration of this application, in view of the above amendments and in light of the following remarks and discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 10-24 are currently pending in the application; Claims 1-7 having been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer, and new Claims 10-24 having been added, by way of the response.

Applicants express thanks for the courtesies extended by Primary Examiner Sandy and Examiner Jackson during a personal interview with Applicants' representatives on June 3, 2003. During the personal interview, Examiners Sandy and Jackson suggested structural features of a seat belt cover that could be recited in the claims. In response, Applicants have canceled Claims 1-7 without prejudice or disclaimer, and have added new Claims 10-16 that recite features similar to those recited in canceled Claims 1-7, respectively, and in accordance with the Examiners' helpful suggestions. Examiners Sandy and Jackson further suggested that features of a seat belt cover, non-limiting examples of which are shown in Figures 7 and 8 of the originally filed application, could be recited in the claims. In response, Applicants have added new Claims 17-20, in accordance with the Examiners' helpful suggestions.

In the outstanding Office Action, the disclosure was objected to because of informalities. In response, Applicants have amended page 4, line 1, of the specification to state "seat" in place of the previous incorrect statement of "sheet." Applicants have also amended page 6, line 29, to state "fashionability" in place of the previous incorrect statement of "fashonability." Thus, Applicants respectfully request that the objection of the disclosure be withdrawn.

In the Office Action, the drawings were objected to under 37 C.F.R. § 1.83(a), as not showing every feature of the invention specified in Claim 1. In response,

Applicants respectfully assert that the objection has been overcome by the cancellation of Claim 1 without prejudice or disclaimer. Thus, for at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully request that the objection be withdrawn.

In the Office Action, Claims 1 and 5 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,335,957 to Golder. Claims 1-4 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,105,219 to Beadle in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,161,824 to Li. Claims 6 and 7 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Beadle in view of Li, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,699,401 to Saenz. Applicants respectfully assert that the rejections of the claims have been overcome by the cancellation of the claims without prejudice or disclaimer. Inasmuch as the rejections may be applied to the new claims, Applicants respectfully submit the following remarks.

The present invention is directed to seat belt covers. Independent Claim 10 recites a flat tubular lower portion defining a lower slit-shaped opening that extends in a first direction and that has a first width. A flat tubular upper portion is disposed apart from the flat tubular lower portion along a second direction that is about perpendicular to the first direction, the flat tubular upper portion defining an upper slit-shaped opening that extends in the first direction and that has a second width that is less than the first width. A flat tubular notched portion is disposed between the flat tubular lower portion and the flat tubular upper portion, the flat tubular notched portion defining a lower notched slit-shaped opening that is disposed adjacent the flat tubular lower portion and that has a third width and an upper notched slit-shaped opening that is disposed adjacent the flat tubular upper portion and that has a fourth width that is less than the third width.

Golder is directed to a restraint device. As shown in Figure 8, for example, of

Golder, a shoulder belt guide means 140 may optionally be provided in a restraint device 110 and preferably as a slit or channel through a tubular guide member 115. In this manner, portions of a vertical run or shoulder restraint S of a three-point system will extend into the channel 140 and thereby adapt the shoulder harness for use by a child.¹

However, Applicants respectfully assert that Golder does not teach or suggest the claimed features of a specified notched portion defining openings having different widths, as recited in independent Claim 10. Specifically, independent Claim 10 recites “a flat tubular notched portion disposed between the flat tubular lower portion and the flat tubular upper portion, the flat tubular notched portion defining a lower notched slit-shaped opening that is disposed adjacent the flat tubular lower portion and that has a third width and an upper notched slit-shaped opening that is disposed adjacent the flat tubular upper portion and that has a fourth width that is less than the third width.”

Beadle is directed to a buckle guard. As shown in Figure 2 and 3, for example, of Beadle, a buckle guard 10 includes a back guard section, generally designated 12; an inner snap guard section, generally designated 14; and an outer snap guard section, generally designated 16.²

However, Applicants respectfully assert that Beadle does not teach or suggest the claimed features of a specified notched portion defining openings having different widths, as recited in independent Claim 10. Rather, as shown in Figure 2 of Beadle, as a consequence of the attachment of the snap guards 14 and 16 to the back guard 12, the openings extending in a vertical direction have a same width, irrespective of the presence of the first and second insertion slot 30 and 42.

¹ Column 7, lines 17-23.

² Column 4, lines 50-55.

Similarly, Li is directed to a safety belt with a protective pad. As shown in Figure 1, for example, of Li, a safety belt with protective pad 1, comprises a belt body 2 on which a protective pad 3 is slidably attached.³

However, Applicants respectfully assert that Li does not teach or suggest the claimed features of a specified notched portion defining openings having different widths, as recited in independent Claim 10.

Thus, for the above reasons, Applicants respectfully assert that none of Golder, Beadle, and Li, whether taken alone or in combination, teach or suggest the claimed features recited in the independent claim. Therefore, Applicants respectfully assert that independent Claim 10 is allowable over the references of record in the application.

Applicants further respectfully assert that dependent Claims 11-16 are allowable for at least the same reasons as independent Claim 10, from which the dependent claims depend.

Applicants respectfully assert that new independent Claim 17, which recites features of a seat belt cover, non-limiting examples of which are illustrated in Figures 7 and 8 of the originally filed specification, is also allowable over the references of record in the application. Applicants further respectfully assert dependent Claims 18-20 are allowable for at least the same reasons as independent Claim 17, from which the dependent claims depend.

Applicants have also added new independent Claim 21 and dependent Claims 22-24. Applicants respectfully assert that support for these claims is self-evident from the originally filed disclosure, including the original claims, and that therefore no new matter has been added. Applicants respectfully assert that new independent Claim 21 recites features that are not taught or suggested by the references of record in the

³ Column 2, lines 24-27.

Appl. No: 09/938,525

Reply to Office Action of March 7, 2003

application. Applicants further respectfully assert dependent Claims 22-24 are allowable for at least the same reasons as independent Claim 21, from which the dependent claims depend.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment, no further issues are believed to be outstanding in the present application, and the present application is believed to be in condition for formal Allowance. A Notice of Allowance for Claims 10-24 is earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner deem that any further action is necessary to place this application in even better form for allowance, the Examiner is requested to contact the undersigned representative at the below listed telephone number.



22850

Tel #: (703)413-3000

Fax #: (703)413-2220

GJM/CDW/PH/me

Respectfully submitted,

OBLON, SPIVAK, McCLELLAND,
MAIER & NEUSTADT, P.C.

Gregory J. Maier

Registration No. 25,599

Attorney of Record

Christopher D. Ward

Registration No. 41,367

I:\ATTY\PH\23's\237692\AMENDMENT_RCE_08042003.DOC